

CONGRESSMAN DANA ROHRABACHER (R-CA)
STATEMENT FOR “*Lunar Science & Resources: Future Options*”
Thursday, April 1, 2004

Thirty years ago, the end of the Apollo era signaled the beginning of a much more narrow, scaled-back agenda for our human space flight program. Fortunately, President Bush made the decision to recommit this nation to its heritage of human exploration beyond Earth’s orbit. The question now is not whether we will return to the Moon, but what things might be done there in the name of science and economic development. Today’s hearing will focus on the Moon’s suitability in these areas for enabling a permanent human presence on the lunar surface. Utilizing key lunar minerals and ores is critical if the Moon’s potential as a scientific and industrial laboratory in Earth’s neighborhood is to be realized.

I share the belief that the Moon affords us the opportunity to pursue exploration in the tradition of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Exploration of a new frontier then aided our nation in laying the groundwork for settling the American Northwest. Similarly, the Moon offers us the potential to establish lunar human settlements in the future. Some question whether resources on the Moon are adequate or commercially exploitable. For example, measurements made by the Defense Department’s Clementine and NASA’s Lunar Prospector probes have suggested the presence of water on the Moon. There is some debate within the science community whether water is sufficiently abundant for sustaining lunar-based operations. Resolving this fundamental issue is key for successfully returning people to the Moon.

NASA’s plan to map lunar resources, however, holds the promise of informing us how people can live and work on the Moon. In this regard we must ensure that the instruments NASA plans to use for mapping lunar resources are the right ones for the task. Is NASA’s planned series of lunar robotic missions adequate? What input from the private sector has NASA received in making these determinations? That said, we have

assembled a panel of expert witnesses that will provide us with their insight and analysis of these issues.

I believe Americans must continue to explore space, but we must know why we are sending humans there. Identifying critical lunar exploration activities will have major implications for our future role as a leader in space.